DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 468.74/9 FOR Despatch #188

FROM Bulgaria (Shoemaker) DATED Feb. 7, 1931.
TO NAME 1—1172

REGARDING: Boundary questions. Composition of differences: Mr. Henderson, the British Sec. of Statefof Foreign Affairs, has agreed to act as mediator between Bulgaria and Greece in the property questions outstanding between the two states.

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768.7415/43

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

763.74115/44

740.0011 Mutual Guarantee(Balkan)/27

SEE ~~xxx.xx/xxx~~ FOR #134

FROM Turkey (Skinner) DATED Feb.16, 1934

TO NAME

1—1127 GPO

REGARDING:

Bulgarian desire for an outlet on the Aegean.

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 469 Istanbul, Turkey, December 10, 1934.

Subject: The Bulgarian Frontier Incident.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DEC 20 1934
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JAN 2 1935
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Legation, Sofia

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JAN 3 - 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

Confidential

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

Sir:

Doubtless it has been noted in the Department that on the morning of November 29th, 1934, on the Greek-Bulgarian frontier an incident occurred which led to the killing of five members of a band of Pomaks by Bulgarian frontier guards and the capture of a number of others. The Pomaks are understood to be Rumelians living in Bulgaria since a number of centuries and who, on taking up their residence in that land, adopted the Moslem faith. It is not supposed that they are Turks by blood or breeding,

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and scarcely by religion, inasmuch as official Turkey has abandoned Islam. The Pomaks in question were said to be fleeing with stolen cattle at a point south of Djovlen, and were followed into Greek territory to a depth of about 1,500 kilometers, due, as was explained, to the heavy fog prevailing at the time.

The incident itself, however distressing in its personal aspects, was not one of great importance, nor indeed unusual in this part of the world. It is said that Greece has accepted Bulgarian explanations and that the incident is closed as between the two countries immediately concerned. It was a remarkable fact, however, that no sooner were the circumstances made known in Turkey than there arose an extraordinary amount of irrelevant criticism in the press, of which Bulgaria became the victim. This publicity created the impression, in the first instance, that the Pomaks were Turks residing in Bulgaria and was out of proportion to the incident itself.

Confidential.

I have been told that the Turkish press received instructions from the Press Bureau at Ankara to treat the affair savagely, and the press undoubtedly responded to the invitation. The precise object sought to be obtained by thus making a mountain out of a mole hill is difficult to surmise, unless back of it lay the thought that an embitterment of relations between Greece and Bulgaria accompanied by hostile allusions in Turkey might conceivably remind Bulgaria

that

that she stood alone in the Balkans and perhaps encourage her to sign the Balkan Pact. The theory is rather difficult to accept, but the fact proves once again with what ease a small affair like cattle-thieving may be expanded into a political incident of the first class in this region.

As a sample of what the Turkish press has said about the killing of the Pomaks I quote merely a few sentences from LA REPUBLIQUE:

> "The act of the Bulgars, massacring nine kilometers beyond their frontier five Turks who were fleeing like sheep escaping from a slaughter house is no small thing ... acts which do not differ from those of bandits deliberately treading on the national dignity of another country. ... Greece has already commenced and will continue to have recourse to all measures which are imposed on her by such a cowardly attack ... Bulgarian bumptiousness constitutes an affront to the Entente Balkanique. ... Truly, if today it is Greece that is attacked, tomorrow it will be the turn of the others ... a Government which shows such indifference in the presence of spilled blood is not and never will be a Government that honors humanity. ... Bulgaria ought to be compelled to make full reparation. ... It is necessary to have Bulgaria engage formally and with specific guarantees never in the future to exercise any injuries on the minorities dwelling within her borders."

Respectfully yours,

Robert P. Skinner.

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RPS:lr

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JM

CHIEF OF STAFF
SECRETARIAT

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JAN 9 1935

WAR DEPARTMENT
2730

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JAN 10 1935
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

G-2 Report

BULGARIA (Combat)

Subject: Banditry - Riots, and Serious Disorders.
Greek-Bulgarian Frontier Incident.

768.74115/46

Several days ago there occurred an incident on the Greek-Bulgarian frontier, of no importance in itself, but perhaps it will be made of great import by hostile propaganda.

The facts are about as follows. A band of Pomaks (Rumelians who centuries ago adopted the Moslem faith to avoid persecution), fleeing with stolen cattle, were pursued by Bulgarian frontier guards. In this section of the frontier just south of Djovlen the mountains are high and rough and the Bulgars, possibly with great truth, claim that due to a heavy fog they crossed the frontier without knowing it. They admit passing some 1,500 meters into Greek territory and there killing five of the band and capturing several others.

Affairs of this sort are not too unusual in this part of the world and this would probably have been adjusted between Greece and Bulgaria without any undue strain. The Turks, however, claim these Pomaks as Turkish citizens and it was intimated to the local press by the Ankara authorities that they might go as far as they liked in their denunciation of this affair.

Following is a rough translation of one of the articles by the owner and editor of "La Republique" who is also a very influential member of the Grand National Assembly and may even be considered as a spokesman for the Government. The article is rather virulent. Just what purpose this propaganda is intended to have is rather hazy — but perhaps it is intended to bring to Bulgaria's notice, with some emphasis, her loneliness surrounded by states all of whom are members of the "Entente Balkanique":

> "The act of the Bulgars, massacring nine kilometers beyond their frontier five Turks who were fleeing before their cruelties like sheep escaping from a slaughter house, is no small thing as one would be led to believe by the communiqué of the Bulgarian Minister of War.
>
> "Allowing themselves to violate foreign territory without scruple and to commit there acts which do not differ from those of bandits, deliberately treading on the national dignity of another country and trampling under foot the rights of sovereignty which that country enjoys as an independent state, such are the facts in all their brutality.

From: M.A. Istanbul Report No. 6461 December 6, 1934.

Interesting in this connection, especially as the Financial Committee of the League is expected to go into the question of the claims against Greece of Bulgarians from Greek Macedonia at its September meeting, is the fact that on July 31 the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague rendered its consultative opinion concerning the interpretation of the convention between Greece and Bulgaria relative to voluntary emigration, signed at Neuilly on November 27, 1919. It will be recalled that the question at issue under this convention concerned the liquidation of church and school property claimed as the collective possession of a religious and racial community. The opinion of The Hague tribunal is that a religious and racial community may constitute a judicial person within the terms of the convention and as such may claim compensation for property abandoned as a result of emigration under the Convention of November 27, 1919. This decision is looked upon here as a vindication of the Bulgarian point of view.

Also interesting in connection with the proposed meeting of Mr. Venizelos and Mr. Bourroff, and consideration by the Financial Committee of the League of the dispute between Bulgaria and Greece over property matters is the recent announcement to the effect that the Greek-Bulgarian Mixed Commission has decided to review all disputed cases of Bulgarian claims to properties left in Greek Macedonia. It is understood that the Commission has given the Bulgarian Delegation until August 15 to submit protested cases.

Very respectfully yours,

Henry W. Shoemaker,
American Minister.

File No. 710.

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